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Designed for all staff and departments who use Accela

Project Status Report

Another productive week has come and gone for our Accela project. And, what a week it has been! This week the Subject Matter Experts (SME's) have been focused on wrapping up details on two outstanding record types, digging into Script writing, and forging ahead on conversion efforts. The work that the SME's are involved with is extremely detailed. They work with every record and every data field specifying how each one is to map to a new home in the Accela Automation product. The work is very tedious and must be exact. The dedication to this process shown by the SME's is exemplary. Each of those involved in this project always work hard to do the thing right and stay on track with project schedules. What more could a Project Manager want! And, on track we are! Scripting and conversion will be complete this month and we will prepare to sign-off on our fourth project deliverable. The first pass of the conversion mapping will be completely tested in June with a second pass planned for July 2 and most likely a third and final pass will occur August 1. We are currently working through some issues with the Accela GIS environment, and I can tell you that Jeff McReynolds, our GIS Program Manager, is on top of the issues. The rich GIS content that will be made available in our new Accela Automation environment will be remarkable. As mentioned last week, there will be more information soon appearing in the newsletter that is geared for the contractor community. We will be slowly rolling out more contractor-specific information and soliciting contractor questions to answer each week. We met with the Unified Construction Council this week to give a project report to them, answer questions, and provide information regarding some of our project goals.

This week we decided to push the envelope a little further and explore some of the newer solutions that Accela now offers within the i-OS platform. To begin with, we had a conference call with Accela's Seth Axthelm and he provided us some great information. We found that this platform opens up new application opportunities with i-Phones and i-Pads. Eventually, Accela will have additional application offerings in Smart Phones which take advantage of Android, Windows and other Smart Phone operating systems as well as other tablet offerings. Today, Accela has an application that is available in the i-OS environment called Mobile Inspector. This platform offers serious consideration for our field inspectors. We are currently making comparisons with Accela's Mobile Office used primarily on laptop computers and the current functionality inspectors have on their ruggedized laptops when using a product they now use in the field called Inspect Track. And, with those products being compared to what is needed for field inspections today, we are really impressed with the Mobile Inspector application which is now available. Mobile Inspector has some neat features. Any i-Phone/i-Pad with a stylus could be used to capture signatures; scheduled inspections are pinpointed to a location on a GIS map; and cameras on these devices can be used to take pictures of work in progress or completed. Additionally, pictures can be annotated (circles or arrows drawn) and saved as documentation or shared between contractors and inspectors. There are other points to consider when using the newer i-OS platform. For example, semi-to-ruggedized laptops cost between $2,000 and $4,000 each and the cost of an i-Pad is well under $1,000. Considering we have 35 devices to buy, the obvious cost savings is considerable. Also, Accela's CEO, Maury Blackman has opened up the Accela application development arena for Accela mobile products by introducing a SDK (Software Development Kit). Accela is a fast moving company and this offering equates to functionality within i-OS that will be rapidly expanding, which in turn creates additional value to Accela customers. Accela's roadmap for their m-Government is heading in the same direction that we aspire to be moving in. In the next week or two we are going to lean on Seth to help us line up a Mobile Inspector webinar for our Chiefs and Inspectors. We also have an i-Pad on loan that we are going to connect to an Accela preview site.

Current Project Challenges

OnBase EDMS - After many months of evaluation, ROI models, and proof of concept projects, OnBase - an enterprise electronic document management system (EDMS) - has now become a reality. This is such great news for the project and for Lincoln! This is a significant commitment in software and financial resources. There are so many "thank yous" that need to be extended for all of the due diligence and extensive behind the scenes work that went into making an enterprise EDMS a reality for the City. A group meeting was held on-site Wednesday with e-Document Resources, the State, IS and related staff. Project plans are being made to rapidly bring the focus of the project first upon the needs of the Accela Automation project and then an extended implementation to meet the many needs of other city departments. In our preliminary discussions with eDocument Resources, a secondary solution surfaced regarding the scanning needs of the Health Department as an interim solution for scanning during the first six months of the project go-live period. There are some contractual issues being worked out between the parties. Meanwhile, the Accela Automation implementation team is working with e-Document Resources in creating an environment for Accela Automation. Initially, it appears that having an environment created and communicating with Accela may be possible within the next two weeks.

Credit Cards - The credit card solution for use at the DSC counter is moving along nicely. Lana Tolbert and Justin Meyer hosted a credit card meeting with the City Treasurer, Budget Office, and others. Some of the discussion points include how to handle the expenses the credit card company charges on a percentage basis, the physical type of credit card authorization devices, and reconciliation. Also discussed were compliance with the bank and on-line merchant accounts and use of VeriSign/PayPal. One decision point is whether or not to create a merchant account for each of the Building and Safety sections. At this time, we will move ahead with a credit card swipe device (about $500) in the DSC. We will most likely end up with one merchant bank account and use the City Treasurer's arrangement with VeriSign/PayPal. Credit card usage on-line via Accela Citizen Access module will be worked out in the next two months. Also, the reporting mechanisms in Permits Plus already sorts and totals report data by money source so credit cards as a source is already accounted for. So, we appear to be ready in the current environment now. A similar report will need to be developed in the Accela Automation environment for use in September. It's exciting to see this group of people push ahead with credit card processing today instead of waiting for a future date after Accela Automation has been implemented. Way to go!

Crystal Report Enterprise - We still are celebrating this great news of the purchase and installation of an enterprise Crystal Report solution for the project and for Lincoln! Having the Accela Automation project be a catalyst of so many positive improvements is such a great thing to be part of. Bob Loos in IS made it his priority to get our Crystal Reports Server changes completed this week. We are now running Crystal Reports 2008 in our BOBI Edge 4.0 environment. We still have to deploy standard reports in this new environment; however, the interface with the Accela Adapter is in working order. We are anxious to see some of the reports begin to appear on the Accela Automation user console. When this is complete the issue will be removed from our current project challenge list.

ProjectDox - We are finding that ProjectDox is beginning to ramp up their use of i-OS platforms too. We may find that using i-Pads for field inspections may allow access to plans to review at our fingertips. We have continued to research other installations. We are getting more impressed at how the software is used to make some great benefits in other cities. Bend City Oregon is one which has done such a great job implementing ProjectDox and making improvements that they host a number of other governments on-site to demonstrate what a difference it has made in their city. We are waiting for Avolve Software to contact us to nail down the project plan and schedule for the upgrade. One more thing about plans. This week we have been looking at projection and display tables which are used as collaborative devices for plan review and GIS mapping discussions. We have found that this technology is evolving and we could potentially create a remarkable center for collaboration, plan review and brainstorming.

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